

## THEORETICAL MODELS AND METHODS OF ACTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN ROMANIA

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*Abstract:* This article presents the main theoretical assumptions underlying the development of social behavior based on psychology research (applications of cost-benefit analysis, management rewards, explanations affective) and sociological (adequacy of social norms, social learning). These were carried out under a series of steps designed to ensure the emergence of educational pro-social behaviors, especially in school education.

*Keywords:* pro-social behavior, education, intervention.

### 1. THEORETICAL MODELS AND METHODS OF ACTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN ROMANIA

Concluding the research aimed to identifying an “altruistic personality type”, (Chelcea, 2006:83) note that as there isn’t a natural born killer type, there is no altruistic type by birth: “altruistic individuals are not different people, but people socialized differently”. In literature, there is a wide range of theoretical approaches on the development of pro-social behavior, both psychological type (started from the cost-benefit analysis, management rewards, explanations affective) and sociological (adequate knowledge of social norms, social learning).

The analysis of cost-benefit has many consequences applied in psychological level of explanation, including highlighting the importance of benefit in developing pro-social behavior. Because the role of past rewards aid in future has been tested experimentally, it requires a practical recommendation: pro-social acts must not be overlooked, but also recognized and appreciated, social validated.

In this context, it is known that the emotional rewards (positive and negative) are those who incite to action in favor of others,

and material rewards without increasing self-esteem have a low motivational force.

As far as it concerns the emotional explanations given to altruism, they are linked to individual needs and enhance self-esteem and keeping a good opinion about their own person.

The greater the effort to achieve an activity (in this case, a pro-social activity), the more the willingness to help others in future will be, and if the individual gets an inner conviction that is a „good man”, once gained confidence, he will be motivated to maintain this image by other pro-social activities (Wosinska, 2005: 261).

Not by coincidence, in some countries where the incidence of volunteering at adults is high, there is in compulsory education the discipline of „community practice”, which consists in providing aid to individuals or groups in need (such are ecological actions, home care, etc.). What at first is a school duty later becomes a life habit, being by internalizing motivation producing these behaviors. In Romania this model began to be promoted in high-schools, by the Order no. 1734/2007 of Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, whose aim is to ensure the development of *National Strategy of Community Action*, which aims to incorporate the volunteering in the curriculum.

Sociological research has also revealed multiple applied consequences, materialized by promoting proper social norms. These approaches refer both to promoting accountability and reciprocity rules, and to proper interpretation in emergency situations other widespread social norms, which may result inhibition of the grant aid (for example, social justice and the nonintervention norms), as well as certain categories of victim „humanization”.

For example, when observing a manifestation of domestic violence, the population of Romania is significantly more lenient than other European countries, as certifies „*National research on domestic violence and workplace – Romania 2003*” realized by *Center for Equal Partnership*. This tolerance for domestic violence „generates, in many cases, considering the violent behavior as normal behavior”, and this type of behavior, „disguised as normal is transmitted from one generation to another” (Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate, 2003:8).

Interpretation as „normal” situations of domestic violence blocks, frequently, pro-social intervention. To remove this way of perceiving situations are necessary steps that rule of nonintervention (widespread in our country) is required so nuanced and explained not to act on behalf of aggressors.

„Humanization” of different categories of victims is successfully practiced in case of negative social phenomena that can be changed only by overcoming a strong cultural resistance (such as domestic violence in Romania). Is trying „to define” the victims in terms designed to limit their culpability for the situation where there are. Other nationally significant example is that of helping people with mental health problems, where social stigma is so clear and is heavily promoted in the media.

Iluț (2004:84-85) shows that as far as it concern social learning pro-social behavior should be considered first formation and cognitive development theories of morality, due to J.Piaget (transition from the heretonomia to autonomous morality) and to L. Kohlberg (description of stages: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional). Practical

corollary of this statement is obvious : there are „critical ages” in which pro-social learning should be concentrated.

## 2. THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES

Stimulation of the aid with the young children is based on the fact that they „do not need to learn altruism” (Sigelman, 1984: 310), but should only be encouraged in this regard. In other words, potential relief is innate, and the simplest measures of education are bearing fruit: public appreciation of altruism by giving evidence preschoolers significantly increases the incidence of such acts.

Using mass media (especially, television) to pro-social educate children proved to be a success. Often cited studies based on a highly successful television series for children, „*Lassie*” (Lippa, 1994: 498; Franzoi, 1996: 310), in which aid was implemented successfully from movie to real life.

Frequently mentioned category in the personal determinants of pro-social behavior refers to positive or negative mental states (whose influence on their mood can be changed). In this context, starting from the existence of „critical age” for pro-social behavior learning, is easily supported the role of child education based on emotional intelligence – especially the one in the family – further production of humanitarian relief acts (Elksnin L., Elksnin N., 2000).

R. Coles (1997, *apud* Iluț, 2004:82) highlight two important aspects of parents’ actual behaviors (both towards their own children, and to other persons) in emotional intelligence development: 1) parents manifestations are much more effective than abstract moralizing sermons; 2) despite increasing media influence, parental determination of how kids operate on emotions is decisive. The same author says that although all the learning experiences of childhood in terms of pro-social behaviors are important, only during the elementary school are crucial.

A completely different situation is that of educational approaches which can be taken as a result of knowing the effects it has the presence of other people in the context of

psychosocial intervention. J. Beaman (1978, *apud* Franzoi, 1996:310) displayed Bibb Latané and John Darley's model to some groups of students and record almost twice as many of their interventions in crisis situations than their colleagues of the year which has not been presented the model. Limiting bystander effect can be achieved through a series of practical measures: facilitate communication between eyewitnesses; clear definition of the situation; non-restricting access to social information.

Providing relief patterns can be done indirectly, especially through television. On this issue can be explicitly designed programs with pro-social content (for e.g., children's television series *Lassie*, which took effect above) or included reports of pro-social behaviors or in other programs (first of all, news bulletins). TV presentations of different types of situations in which people help each other "can lead to the creation of social norms to guide behavior to support social values, to charity" (Chelcea, 2006:73).

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS IN THE EMERGENCE OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Unlike the fictional models offered by the small screen, direct observation of pro-social behavior significantly increases the chances of granting aid: "The more we will promote social values through our actions, the more we will powerful influence on others in terms of achievement of pro-social behavior" (Chelcea, Țăran, 1990:201).

Exposure to actual patterns of action was made in the experiments which showed that increases the probability of observing a pro-social model to provide aid, regardless of person's age who observes pro-social act, as standard gives prominent social responsibility, help to define the situation as an emergency one and allows the observer to estimate the cost of intervention. Although the previous statement has been proven rigorously only in terms of emergency situations, it is almost certainly true for the pro-social behavior with a longer duration.

Analysis of the factors interact in the context of the prosocial behavior were formulated following a series of recommendations in the context of the aid request. For e.g., Wilhemina Wosinska (2005: 266) recommends the use of replicas that will lead to strengthening the sense of community similarities or affirmation «us» through social connections with the person that is going to seek help. Septimiu Chelcea (2006) underline the conclusion of several common experimental studies, according to which "moderation in aid support is more effective than insistence", in order not to produce the phenomenon of "psychological reactance".

The key recommendation on situational factors influence is found in almost all literature consulted and refers to the need to reduce ambiguity situation, so that it can be correctly and quickly identified as a request for help. The ambiguity can be reduced by requiring a specific definition on the emergency aid by the victim („*I feel like a heart-attack!*” instead of undifferentiated „*Help!*”); addressing the request of help to a single person, to make her responsible („*Man with blue shirt, please call 112!*”) or organizing the intervention by witnesses, by setting and division of concrete tasks.

An example of organizing a pro-social intervention is that of passengers and crew members on *United 93*, the last plane crashed on 11.09.2001. Because, the passengers and crew members diversion eluded the outcome of the other three aircraft have organized a response that in the end led to plane crash by terrorists. This case can be considered as a collective pro-social behavior, because many of the passengers and crew members announced their families their intention to regain control of the aircraft, mentioning pro-social motivation of their gesture.

Different ways that can be favored the producing of pro-social behavior above presented (by practical consequences of adopting the pro-social intervention model or by operation of social intervention) are strongly influenced by socio-cultural context in which one would like to encourage the production of pro-social behavior.

In post-Revolution Romania can be seen that is a sharp promotional material existence values, encouraging consumption as a form of absolute individual „fulfillment” and social certification success almost exclusively in financial terms.

In these circumstances, Serge Moscovici's remark (1998:61-73) under which selfishness is the norm and altruism is deviance in West is well illustrated in Romania's case, where the adoption of capitalist economic model was done with enthusiasm, but also with an obvious disregard for the assumption of social responsibility practices at company level or individual level. In this context, pro-social behaviors are still a rare species, encouraging the production of pro-social behaviors is a goal and a challenge in today's Romanian society.

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